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ABSTRACT

Fifty-five million people were transfixed before their television sets in July 1987 by the agonistic 21-minute summation of Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii of the events of the congressional inquiry into the Iran-Contra scandal. Senator Inouye's text summarized and characterized split national purposes that collided, in which norms and codes of honor and dignity were violated. Inouye's text is a rhetorical situation because it was a response to a circumstance. Citizens will have to determine whether this contemporary rhetoric refers to substitutions of private morality for public morality, private for public knowledge, individualized senses of dignity for communitarian honor, loyalty to one ill-fated star group for allegiance to proven principles, pseudo-event image for reality, and "old coats" for scary childhood shadows. If Aristotle and Burke are right, vis-a-vis democracy and timocracy, then the Ollie North/Iran-Contra debacle was inevitable. And, unless failsafe-guards are instituted in government in which the love of Honor is the ruling principle, many more failures are likely. (RAE)

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WHEN TWO BREEDS OF HERO LOCK HORNS: THE INOUYE SUMMATION AS CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC

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Perversion is a major aspect of No.
Aristotle calls democracy...the "perversion"
(parekbaseis) of timocracy.... (See Nichomachaean
Ethics, VIII, x, for instance.)

-- Kenneth Burke
"A Dramatistic View of the Origins of Language"
in LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC ACTION
pp. 473-474

Not that it carries the gravity of the assassination of a young and popular president, but I, for one, will always remember where I was and what I was doing on the afternoon of July 14, 1987.

An "intimate" group of 55 million people (US News & World Report, July 27, 1987) and I were transfixed before cathode ray tubes by the agonistic 21-minute summation of Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, co-chair of the congressional inquiry committee assigned to the Iran-contra scandal.

This study attempts to draft a way to inhabit this dramatically changed political space with a blueprint whose lines are drawn from Burke, Bitzer, Condit, Weaver, Turner, and Philipsen, who, in other contexts, would be strange bedfellows.

Inouye's text summarizes and characterizes split national purposes that collided in which norms and codes of honor and dignity, as described by Philipsen, were violated.

Inouye's text is a rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968), because it was, of course, a response to a circumstance, at the least. It is rife with the contrast of private and public knowledge (Bitzer, 1971). It overflows with ebulient, charismatic ultimate terms (Weaver, 1965). These useful, credible, and durable theoretical notions are further crystallized by Condit's criticism of the privatization of morality, which I extend here to apply to the privatization of information and government resources in our international debacle; and by the operation of the exigence of narrative and redressive action in Turner's understanding of social drama (1980).

In addition, there is a heady temptation and potential to try to make sense of the motivation(s) that precipitated the Iran-contra hearings by viewing them through some postmodern looking-glass (darkly, of course); or through the lens of Boorstin's (1961/1977) pseudo-event image; or through Burke's (1935/1984) "perspective by incongruity."

These three strains, while not controlling (at this writing) set the tone of this inquiry. For example, all three might concur that the mind-trick mass hysteria operating in "The Emporer's New Clothes" was appropriated in the international scandal of our time. Here, tremendous energy and resources were diverted to `put a new face on' nakedness and facelessness. One could "read" this as a visual metonymic synechdoche (conveniently graphed by the New York Times, 26 July 1987).

Exhibit "A" - here...:

Boorstin's entire seminal schema tells us we have made an art of routine self-deception -- hiding "reality" from ourselves, especially in the public realm. When in his mid-50s, Boorstin, a consummate public historian and lover of America observed:

> I have long suspected that our problems arise less from our weaknesses than from our strengths. From our literacy and wealth and optimism and progress (vii).

These capabilities, he says, cause us to expect too much from our world. As though inspired by premonition, he wrote 26 years ago:

> We expect new heroes every season...A dramatic spectacular every week....We have the ability to

> create events when there are none, and to make heroes when they don't exist....
>
> ...to fabricate national purposes when we lack them, and to pursue these purposes after we have fabricated them (pp. 3-5).

Carrying this art-or-artifice discussion further, Burkean eyes might see the "Iran-amuck"/"Teheransvestite" deceptions as deliberate alterations of perceptions -- deliberate re-naming-- deliberate de-construction for the sake of re-construction. In his "Four Master Tropes" in A Grammar of Motives (1945) Burke explains:

> Such perspectives are incongruity, because the seeing of something in terms of something else involves the "carrying over" of a term from one realm into another, a process that necessarily involves varying degrees of incongruity in that the two realms are never identical (pp. 504-505).

In Permanence and Change (1984) Burke tells a vividly memorable story:

> The notion of perspective by incongruity would suggest that one casts out devils by misnaming them. It is not the naming in itself that does the work, but the conversion downward implicit in such naming. Has one seen a child trembling in terror at a vague shape in a corner? One goes impiously into that corner, while the child looks on aghast. One picks an old coat off the clothes-rack, and one says, 'Look, it is only an old coat.' The child breaks into fitful giggles. Has one named the object which struck terror in the child? On the contrary, one has totally misnamed it, as regards its nature in the child's precious orientation. To have named it would have been to call out, 'Away, thou hideous monster -- thou cackling demon of hell, away!' and henceforth that corner would be the very altar of terror. One casts out demons by a vocabulary of conversion, by an incongruous naming, by calling them the very thing in all the world they are not: old coats (p.133).

I submit that the omissions and embellishments we began

learning two years ago are as "old coat" as calling Ronald Reagan "code name: Joshua."

If I have drafted a way to inhabit a dramatically changed political space, then let's proceed with the blueprint. The rhetorical situation is a definitional foot in the door: The Inouye summation is a moral rhetorical act, because it was a response to a very complex situation involving human moral dilemmas. The summation rises to rhetorical discourse, because the crisis situation demanded it.

The summation was invited by several hosts: the long-standing mandate and custom of congressional hearings; the facts of this amazing international disgrace; and, perhaps, it was expected in light of ideological differences, the mission of inquiry committees; and as a national redressive act, the third act in Turner's four-act model of social drama, a phenomenon which Burke called "dramas of living."

In rhetorical situations, "many questions go unanswered, and many problems remain unsolved (p. 43)." As applied to the Inouye summation, the identification of <u>exigence</u> in rhetorical situations (combining "persons, events, objects, and relations") is particularly appropriate to our understanding. Such a situation, requiring response, is incomplete in material ways; it has defects and imperfections; it follows injurious behavior; observers and participants share a deep sense of urgency; and a response is necessary.

In order to qualify as "rhetorical," the exigence must carry the capability of modification. Herein lies the beauty of

the Bitzer/Turner/Condit/Burke intersection: They all believe rehabilitation is possible through rhetoric.

I call the Inouye summation an "incident" to underscore its rich contextual meaning (Bitzer, 1968), punctuated by two spontaneous interruptions. The first interruption (Transcript at p.738), is pivotal, because it interjects a totally-unexpected double-layer of exigence over an already emotionally-charged rhetorical situation, pregnant with "imperfection," "urgency," and "necessity" (Bitzer, p.43, 1968).

In it, New Hampshire Republican Allen Rudman announces, "something has happened in the last 48 hours (that is) so disturbing," but he must get it out, even "over the chairman's objections." This sets-up an anxious expectation in an otherwise agenda-set, tightly-organized and secured, austere, courtroom atmosphere. But, more importantly, Rudman's calling attention to the "ugly ethnic slurs" against Inouye (who is of Japanese and Hawaiian tribal decent), called-in and mailed to the "insulted" committee by "a small minority...that have no place in America" (slurs, that is), allows a brief opportunity to tell the multiple audiences (Bitzer, 1968) who the modest chairman and 16 committee members are. By listing steamy combat zones and medals for valor, and by sharing the fact that Inouye left part of his body on a W.W.II Italian battlefield, Rudman, in effect, calls his fellow inquisitors heroes. This is an implicit understanding, while the news media was co-constructing the consummate contemporary "hero," and to the face of the man whom the president repeatedly called a national hero, because he enabled

Nicaraguan contra rebels.

The fact is, Chairman Inouye did not abort Rudman's statement, but the studied videotape shows a moved, middle-aged, self-effacing officer who reached uneasily for the glass of water on his desk, effectively covering the face with the hand and glass -- and giving the face something to do, while Rudman's extemporaneous and touching words iced the setting and provided context-meaning. When the glass came down, and the swallows ceased, it was clear that Inouye's face had crumbled a little.

Several minutes later, he began his summation by placing (Philipsen, pp. 251-252) himself culturally in a state that "honors" a warrior-king and a saint. It was a subtle, implicit acknowledgement of Rudman's indignation and his own tacit disgust. More importantly, it was an artful couching of words that helped place the hearings and composition of Americans' ethnic roots in an international, cultural context.

More concretely, the Rudman/Inouye segue functioned as a transitional device, focussing attention back into the substance of the hearing: the undercurrent of which was the breaking of norms, and collision of a type of honor code with a type of dignity code (Philipsen, pp.255-257, 259). Inouye observed:

> From the beginning of the history of mankind, organized societies, whether they be tribes or clans or nations, have nurtured and created heroes, because heroes are necessary. They serve as a cement to unite people, to bring unity....It provides glory to their history, it provides legends (Transcript, p. 748).

Continuing this discussion of a universal cultural norm, in which he probably would agree with Dilthey's belief in "etic" narrative (Turner, p.167), Inouye cited the heroes and

heroines of states, and those of this nation memorialized in the abstract in national narratives and (more concretely) by iconistic monuments.

However, the balance of the text -- after he regrets having co-constructed North's new image by virtue of the public nature of the revelations and hearings -- is devoted primarily to emergence of <u>his own</u> narrative. Between the lines, he is saying, in effect, there are Heroes with a capital 'H,' and other kinds of..."heroes," who are not worthy of honor and emulation. This is vitally important to Inouye, because he clearly states his fear that young Americans, taken by North's "gallant presence" and "articulate statements," will want to fashion their careers or lives upon his model.

Combining Rudman's and Inouye's discourse on <u>who</u> heroes are, by deduction the message comes through that if America wants to call North a "hero," it will have to redefine the term.

By showing how North violated governmental, republican, and democratic norms of behavior, Inouye hopes to separate followers from North and to preclude future violations of the norms of our form of self-governance. In fact, at one point, Inouye suggests that the young zealot believed "the ends justifies the means," which is at the heart of Marxist/communist philosophy.

"In 1964, when Col. North was a cadet, he took an oath of office," his narrative goes. Later, the story matures to incorporate the icons and symbolism of putting on the "uniform and bars of a second lieutenant," signifying his subjection under the "Uniform Code of Military Justice." In very brief summary,

Inouye emphasizes that:

> ...it must be lawful orders of a superior officer. In fact, it says, members of the military have an obligation to disobey unlawful orders. This principle was considered so important that we -- the government of the United States -- proposed that it be internationally applied in the Nuremberg trials....(Transcript, p. 750).

(2nd exigent interruption by attorney Sullivan here.)

The Inouye text, as a "rhetorical situation" is a response to the collision of what has been called the "Code of Honor" and the "Code of Dignity" (Philipsen, pp. 255-257, 259). Inouye generally upholds this honor banner of hierarchy and tradition; while North defends the flag of dignity, symbolizing individuality -- the person against the collectivity, self-worth, and "inalienable rights to material well-being without the need to ask for it" (Philipsen, p. 257). Here, I also extend Philipsen's undefined meaning of "material" to include the intangible values repeated by North.

At this point, ("Nuremburg," Transcript, p.750) North's attorney, Richard Sullivan, startles the deep-voiced placid flow with the aforementioned interruption. It has intrinsic worth, because it is the only place in this particular segment of the social drama where televised meta-communication occurs. At 750-751, we witness:

> MR.SULLIVAN: (yelling) -- I find this offensive! I find you engaging in a personal attack on Col. North, and you're far removed from the issues of this case. To make reference to the Nuremberg trials, I find personally and professionally distasteful, and I can no longer sit here and listen to this.
>
> CHAIRMAN INOUYE: (calmly) -- You will have to sit there, if you want to listen.

MR. SULLIVAN: (yelling) -- Mr. Chairman, please don't conclude these hearings on this unfair note. I have strong objections to many things in the hearings, and you up there speak about listening to the American people....

At this point, the clipped response to the yelled objection given, each protagonist tells the other what his conception is of proper talk to or about the witness:

CHAIRMAN INOUYE: I have sat here, listened to the Col. without interrupting. I hope you will accord me the courtesy of saying my piece.

MR. SULLIVAN: Sir, you may give speeches on the issues, it seems to me. You may ask questions, but you may not attack him personally. This has gone too far, in my opinion, with all due respect.

CHAIRMAN INOUYE: I'm not attacking him personally.

MR. SULLIVAN: That's the way I hear it.

Without specific reference, Inouye inflames the context-meaning of his rhetoric by injecting a suggestion of facism and nazism in reference to North. The Transcript (at p. 750-751) clearly shows how Inouye aborted that line of progression.

Unlike some of the rehearsed, written, less candid hearing testimony, designed and prepared in advance by the politically-motivated, replete with sound bites to feed to the masses, this emotionally-charged exchange was devoid of imagery and superlative language, (not that that is uncommon in exigent, pressured, public settings).

Though beyond the scope of this paper, other content-analyzed parts of the hearing transcript could yield useful and entertaining tropes. Instead of examining the imagery "of"

catharsis as did Burke (1966, pp.308-343), what's behind a political body's thinking could be probed, induced by imagery "as" catharsis. This ritualistic, public purging is full of "No-no kinds of imagery." And, as Burke further instructs, "man cannot properly use language at all unless he has a feel for the principle of the negative (p.342)."

Such a study could also weave the Burke thread to those of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who observe:

> The metaphors we live by, whether cultural or personal, are partially preserved in ritual.
> Cultural metaphors, and the values entailed by them, are propagated by ritual.
> Ritual forms an indispensable part of the experiential basis for our cultural metaphorical systems (p. 234).

However, what the Inouye "ritual" or speech event/rhetorical situation tells us is that tremendous tension exists between the ideologially-juxtaposed opponents (those who adhere to the Code of Honor -- timocratic beliefs -- and those who adhere to the Code of Dignity -- individualistic `local' beliefs) in this social drama.

Sullivan's role is to defend his client, speaking in legaleze, to get objections on the record; and objecting with varying degrees of invective is not only permissible, it is expected. The kind of person who performs this way is a lawyer in a ritualistic (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Turner, 1980), legalistic/public arena.

Inouye, in partial fulfillment of his role as a member of that arena (or "star group" which Turner discovered, p.149-150) invoked not only several "god terms," (Burke, 212; and Philipsen,

p.259) but transcendent ultimate "charismatic terms" (Weaver, p.227-232). He could not have left the hearing room, for example, without using "freedom," "democracy," "Founding Fathers," and "Constitution." ("KGB," "communism," and "Marxism" are perceived by a number of people as being ultimate devil terms.)

It might be said this loaded language carries heavy meaning utility. Such language in our culture connotes a special realm: the top of a hierarchy; finality in a series; subsumation of all other related ideas; a unique and fundamental source. In short, this is the stuff of which "public knowledge" (Bitzer, 1971) is made. It is the way public officials talk to each other and to us. It is their stock-in-trade, their system of key terms.

That the public model of morality was shunted away by a private model is something upon which Condit (1987) and Inouye would concur. "Privatized morality" (perhaps the rough equivalent of Aristotle's "local" communities where people share the same ideologies unbounded by geography (Ethics); Philipsen's Code of Dignity; and Bitzer's private knowledge), is, she says, "conversational," independent, and "individualistic."

It is, as she says, "escapist," and "pessimistic." Privatized models of morality offer "wrenching alternatives...in an immoral social world" (p.81). While she champions the assertion that "public morality is constructed, implemented and improved through public argument," she also tries to understand the motivation of those who "retreat from the public realm to `local' communities of like-minded individuals...who turn to ambiguous `gods' and `ingenious' leaders" (pp.80-81).

Put in current parlance, when Congress took Nancy's advice and 'just said no' to continued contra military aid, public discourse was seen by the cadre as being "hopeless" (Condit), forcing that "star group" or "local" community to crystallize, mobilize, and go underground.

However, that "the disturbed social group" (Turner, 1980, p.151) is now aborted and exposed through public knowledge, morality of the collectivity, the sense of exigence of the larger, dominant culture, and the honor code reigning over the dignity code, all evidence two enduring theoretical themes, I think: 1) that our public system is, once again, capable of "modifying" an exigence (Bitzer, 1968, p.43); and 2) that the public performance/ritual to redress -- following breach of the republican/governmental/democratic norm and subsequent crisis-- (Turner, 1980, p.151 and passim) is a vitally necessary catharsis, enabled by the social drama process.

At this particular writing in the history of the Iran-contra scandal, we are now in Turner's final and fourth phase of the drama. The president-elect's rumored pardon of North and other deviant "star group" members would be action based upon the motive of "reintegration." Recognition by the larger, honor code culture of "irreparable breach" will follow, if further criminal indictments and imprisonment the equivalent of Turner's "spatial separation," (p.151) result.

Turner's explanation of how the political/economic social drama operates is not only a major sensitive contribution to our understanding, it is practical and timely, and one through which

many perceptions can be filtered. For example, Iran-contra investigators have announced their piecing together of a deliberately "jumbled" memo which shows that Vice President George Bush strongly supported contra aid -- a repeated suspicion repeatedly denied (Associated Press, 18 Dec. 1987 - 13 Oct. 1988).

Turner astutely observes that "some tragic situations arise from conflicts of loyalty to different star groups" (p.149). But this is celebrated by Inouye:

> What is happening in this room is important, because it dramatically demonstrates the strength of this democracy....Unlike communism, we are not afraid to wash our dirty linen in public (p.752).

And Bitzer (1971) points the way toward rehabilitation:

> A public in possession of such knowledge is made competent to accredit new truth and value, and to authorize decision and action (p. 68).

A note of hope for the future is sounded by Condit:

> It is possible and preferable to maintain a theory that recognizes collective discourse as the source of an active public morality...(rather than) errant root metaphors that nourish the "privatization" of morality (p. 79).

The rhetoric of the Inouye summation symbolizes, perhaps in one way, what Boorstin meant when he wrote, "What ails us most is not what we have done with America, but what we have <u>substituted</u> for it" (p.66). Citizens will have to determine whether this contemporary rhetoric refers to substitutions of private morality for public morality; of

private for public knowledge; of individualized senses of dignity for communitarian honor; of loyalty to one ill-fated star group for allegiance to proven principles; of pseudo-event image for reality; and of "old coats" for scary childhood shadows.

If Aristotle and Burke are right, vis-a-vis democracy and timocracy, then the Ollie North/Iran-contra debacle was inevitable. And, unless failsafe-guards are instituted in our form of government in which the love of Honor is the ruling principle, we may brace ourselves for many more failures.

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